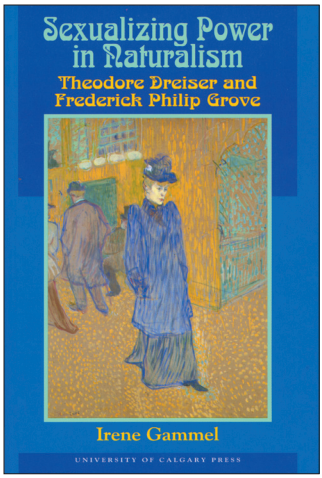

SEXUALIZING POWER IN NATURALISM: THEODORE DREISER AND FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE

by Irene Gammel

ISBN 978-1-55238-631-6

Sexualizing Power in Naturalism

Theodore Dreiser and Frederick Philip Grove

Irene Gammel

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY PRESS

Sexualizing Power in Naturalism

Theodore Dreiser and Frederick Philip Grove

This page intentionally left blank

Sexualizing Power in Naturalism

Theodore Dreiser and Frederick Philip Grove

Irene Gammel

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY PRESS

University of Calgary Press
2500 University Drive N.W.
Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2N 1N4

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Gammel, Irene, 1959–
Sexualizing power in naturalism

Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 1-895176-39-5
ISBN 978-1-55238-631-6
1. Grove, Frederick Philip, 1879–1948—Criticism and interpretation. 2. Dreiser, Theodore, 1871–1945—Criticism and interpretation. 3. Naturalism in literature. 4. Sex in literature. 5. Women in literature. I. Title.
PS8513.R68Z65 1994 C813'.52 C94-910931-2
PR9199.2.G76Z65 1994

COMMITTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Front cover: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Jane Avril Leaving the Moulin Rouge, 1892.* Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut. Bequest of George A. Gay.

Printed and bound in Canada by Hignell Printing Ltd.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

To my parents,

Gertrud and Gerhard Gammel

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

This page intentionally left blank

Acknowledgements

This book began as a doctoral dissertation at McMaster University, but its roots go back even further. After I had left Germany to study in Canada in 1986, Carl Ballstadt's exploration of the "Literature of the Arrival" introduced me to F.P. Grove, touching some deep cords in my own life of cultural transition. Thus, the research for and writing of this book have helped me come to grips with my own efforts at translating and recontextualizing cultural conventions left behind.

Just as the process of researching this book has created an exciting network of new friends and ideas, so this book as a finished product is an intertextual web, deeply indebted to the stimulus and inspiration of others, whom I would like to thank: Joseph Adamson, Barry Allen, Carl Ballstadt, E.D. Blodgett, James Brasch, Gaby Divay, Gisi Baronin von Freytag-Loringhoven, Elizabeth Epperly, Miriam Gogol, Hans Itschert, Heather Jones, Erhard Linsen, Hans-Jörg Neuschäfer, Mary O'Connor, and Jean Wilson. I am very grateful to Don Mason for his valuable editorial advice and his preparation of the index. My special thanks go to Ed Martin for his generosity in reading and commenting on the early drafts.

Parts of this book have appeared in earlier versions in the following journals: *Canadian Literature*, 135 (Winter 1992), *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 23.3 (July 1992), *Studies in Canadian Literature* 17.2 (1992), and *The Canadian Review of American Studies* 22 (Fall 1991). I am grateful for permission to reprint parts of this material. Also, it was the work on a chapter for Miriam Gogol's forthcoming collection of essays entitled *Theodore Dreiser: Beyond Naturalism* (New York: New York UP, 1995)

that helped me shape my thoughts on Dreiser's conceptualization of female sexuality. By a twist of fate, my book happens to precede hers by a few months, but I would like to acknowledge that the original material really belongs to her collection.

This book has greatly benefited from the generous support of the World University Service of Canada as well as the T. Glendenning Hamilton Research Grant of the University of Manitoba. Finally, this book has been published with the help of a grant from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Introduction

Naturalism's "gallery of women" includes such diverse figures as the actress-prostitute, the woman yielding passively to "la chair molle," and the sexually active female, whose body becomes a source of contagious disease. Within the boundaries of naturalist fiction, female sexuality is always already problematic and dangerous. Naturalism's treatment of female sexuality in different centuries and countries highlights the underlying gender bias of the genre, but the changes in the representation of its sexualized stock figures also signal the subtle ideological, aesthetic, and cultural shifts in naturalism across temporal and national boundaries. Though naturalism is often seen as a nineteenth-century European literary reaction to the industrial and Darwinian revolution, the twentieth century witnessed a renaissance of naturalist forms in North America at a time when modernism, with its formal and generic experimentations, was about to establish itself as the dominant paradigm of literature. One objective of this study is to examine what made it possible for American and Canadian naturalist forms to carve out a niche for themselves and survive alongside expressionist and modernist art forms. I argue that the "survival" and transformation of European naturalist conventions

in a North American context is deeply rooted in the genre's preoccupation with sexuality and power. By appropriating this nineteenth-century naturalist concern, American and Canadian naturalism established itself as a significant art form in the early twentieth century, translating, recontextualizing, and rewriting the conventions of nineteenth-century European forms.

The conventions of European naturalism have most recently been theorized by David Baguley in *Naturalist Fiction: The Entropic Vision* (1990), which I use as a point of departure. Emphasizing naturalism's obsession with sexuality, and especially with female sexuality, Baguley notes that there are "fundamental links between naturalist narratology, physiology and (the sadistic fantasies of some kind of advanced form of) 'Ripperology.'"[1] Amongst others, he points to the Goncourts' *Germinie Lacerteux* (1864) as a representative text: "Germinie, as well as being of the People, is also Woman, another unexplored territory, another 'coin saignant de l'humanité,' probed by the fascinated scrutiny of the male naturalist cum physiologist, a hysterical woman with unrestrained sexual cravings" (*NF* 83). Indeed, from its "official" beginning in the nineteenth century, female sexuality has played a pivotal role in naturalist fiction, which is not to say that male characters are outside the realm of sexuality. The naturalist gallery of sexualized females frequently finds its male counterpart in the prostitute's customer, the womanizer, the fetishist, and the sexually predatory employer. It should come as no surprise, then, that much of the sexualized power inscribed in the naturalist genre is conceptualized in engendered terms. As a general rule, naturalist fiction presents male authors, narrators, and characters looking at, inspecting, and framing female sexuality and the female body. Baguley highlights that European naturalism has an aura of a "club for males only," much of their writing being "about the threat of femininity, the dangers of feminisation" (*NF* 84).

Using Baguley's notion of the naturalist "male club" as a springboard, I want to provide a revisionary – gender-critical – reading of twentieth-century American and Canadian naturalism. This approach is partly indebted to Judith Fetterley's notion of the "resisting reader,"[2] as it resists a reading along the male authors' "intentions." Instead, it aims at exposing naturalism's male complicity in the very sexualization of power

---

1 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP) 83. References will appear in the text, abbreviated *NF*.

2 This notion is discussed in her book of the same name, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978).

the genre so ostentatiously highlights in its thematics. Rereading a predominantly male genre, then, means revealing and critiquing the texts' (male) biases, ideologies, and self-contradictions. In this approach, modern French feminist theory with its focus on *écriture féminine*, on female pleasure and the body provides a critical frame to explore naturalism's negative obsession with the female body as a locus of contagion, of either excessive (hysterical, nymphomaniac, and sado-masochistic) or repressed (frigid, hostile, and exploitative) sexuality.

Connected with this gender-critical perspective is a second project, namely, a study of the specific ruptures in naturalism's representation of sexuality as the genre crossed from the nineteenth into the twentieth century. Nineteenth-century European naturalism had established itself as a literature with the right to articulate the "truth" on sexuality; twentieth-century American and Canadian naturalism continued this tradition at a time that witnessed radical changes in sexual behaviour and norms. Naturalism's ideology and aesthetics were undoubtedly shaped by the historical changes that announced the advent of the twentieth century: the large-scale deployment of an urbanite consumer market (that appealed primarily to women and was accompanied by a new pleasure ideology), the arrival of the New Woman (who claimed her sexual and professional rights at the turn of the century), and the ensuing crisis of masculinity (with its defense of traditional forms of male sexuality and power). Thus, twentieth-century naturalism became a field in which these changes in sexual mores were not just translated into literary conventions, but were also debated and negotiated. In this process, naturalism's traditional character types and motifs were recontextualized in new forms and given new ideological twists, at the same time that the genre's boundaries also served as a frame to contain what may have been perceived as women's "excessive" rebellion and threatening demand for change.

With the cultural shift from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, a subtle shift occurred, for instance, in the representation of the prostitute, the "inevitable" female icon of nineteenth-century naturalism. The naturalist prototype for this figure is undoubtedly Zola's title character in *Nana* (1880), who represents the nineteenth-century commercialization of life by selling her sexualized body both as an actress and as a literal prostitute. With the increasing demand for new female sexual rights at the turn of the century, German and Canadian naturalist fiction frequently deconstructs the Nana-figure, drawing attention to its social construction and its misogynistic implications. Furthermore, in twentieth-century American naturalism the literal prostitute is increasingly replaced by the "imaginary prostitute," who makes her living by selling

"not the reality of flesh, but its image," to use Angela Carter's polemical words.[3] In Zola's fiction, sex crosses class boundaries (men of all social classes have access to Nana's body), whereas the American treatment of sexuality in Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900) and Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905) place more emphasis on sexuality as a marker of social difference: bourgeois sexuality is much more refined and artistic than proletarian sex. At the same time, sexuality in twentieth-century naturalism is paradoxically also a field of ironic levelling, continually deflating D.H. Lawrence's romanticized version of sex as a quasi-religious force. As an object of abstract, distanced, and scopophilic desire rather than of actual sexual intercourse, the body of the high-class "imaginary" prostitute symbolizes an increasingly more sophisticated consumer economy that works not through suppression and crude exploitation but through pleasurable seduction.

Some of these cultural transitions in naturalism are already anticipated in Zola's middle and late fiction. The twentieth-century emphasis on the displacement of the sexual act into consumer desire is initiated by Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883). The representation of the family, another naturalist topic and privileged locus for the inscription of sexuality and power in nineteenth-century French naturalism, undergoes a similar shift under the influence of psychoanalysis. Twentieth-century German, Canadian, and American naturalist fiction shifts its focus from the genetically determined to the Oedipal family, with the different family members enchained in laws of psychological determinism and circles of incestuous obsessions. Often the father figure appears to the rebelling daughter as a repulsive figure of tyrannical power while she is simultaneously chained to his seductive power: he often emerges as the ultimate fantasy love object in her life. If nineteenth-century naturalism is mainly interested in sexual reproduction as a site of a hereditary determination of the next generation, early twentieth-century naturalism focuses its attention on questions of contraception and abortion, the very questions that Zola had started to explore in his late work *Fécondité* (1899). Although the emphasis changes, the sexualization of power continues to be the privileged focus in American and Canadian naturalist fiction.

In order to explore the sexualization of power in twentieth-century naturalism, I have chosen to examine the fiction of two representative authors, Frederick Philip Grove (1879–1948) and Theodore Dreiser (1871–

---

3 Angela Carter, *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (London: Virago, 1990) 67.

1945). This choice allows me to cover the first four decades of the twentieth century and three cultures – German, Canadian, and American. As an immigrant from Germany and as the son of a first-generation German immigrant, respectively, Grove and Dreiser not only shared a common cultural heritage but were canonized as America's and Canada's naturalist figureheads. At first rejected as a naturalist, Dreiser was soon embraced by his readers as America's Zola, especially after the publication of his bestselling novel *An American Tragedy* (1925) (which coincided with the publication of Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh* in Canada). In 1930, Vernon Louis Parrington labelled Dreiser the "Chief of American Naturalists"; in 1941, Oscar Cargill described Dreiser's work as "the very quintessence of Naturalism"; and in 1955, Robert Spiller had Dreiser's naturalism coincide with "America's second literary renaissance."[4] Since the 1970s, there have also been studies examining the extent to which Dreiser moves "beyond naturalism," emphasizing that Dreiser's writing is different from Zola's naturalism.[5] Such studies, although they have made significant contributions, frequently depart from a static notion of naturalism, one that simply equates naturalism with Zola's hereditary determinism. Reconceptualizing naturalism as a dynamic, continually changing genre, I propose a careful examination of the transformations naturalism has undergone in Dreiser's American and Grove's Canadian fiction.

In Part 1, I will examine the changes and ruptures in the genre's concern with sexuality and power. My argument on naturalism's sexualization of power takes as its starting point Michel Foucault's theory that in Western society, power and sexuality are deeply enmeshed with each other, condition and support each other. In *The History of Sexuality* (1976), the French historian has argued that sexuality – an historical construct – does not exist before, but is constructed in, culture. Although this point is opposed to naturalism's traditional vision of sexuality as an innate drive that precedes language and culture, it clearly intersects with naturalism's social determinism. Tracing the Western "history of sexuality," Foucault has raised the question why there is such an obsession

---

4 Vernon Louis Parrington, "1860–1920: The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America," *Main Currents in American Thought*, vol. 3 (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1930) 354; Oscar Cargill, *Intellectual America: Ideas on the March* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), 107; Robert E. Spiller, *The Cycle of American Literature: An Essay in Historical Criticism* (1955; New York: Mentor with Macmillan, 1956), 162.

5 See, for example, Paul Orlov's "The Subversion of the Self: Anti-Naturalistic Crux in *An American Tragedy*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 23 (1977–78): 457–72. Also Miriam Gogol's forthcoming collection of essays is entitled *Theodore Dreiser: Beyond Naturalism* (New York: New York UP, 1995).

in Western societies to put sexuality into discourse in science and medicine, juridical and bureaucratic apparatuses. Foucault's answer is baffling in its simplicity and unconventionality: sexuality has become the "arm of power" through which controls are exerted over the individual and social body. Far from repressing sexuality, the social agencies of power make use of sexuality, by concerning themselves with the health and well-being of the individual and social body. No longer purely repressive, power seduces, co-opts, and requires its victim's complicity and assent.

From the vantage point of Foucault's "history of sexuality," naturalist fiction emerges as both a product of social assumptions about sexuality and a cultural agent that actively participates in the construction and perpetuation of dominant scientific models on sexuality. Foucault has identified the hereditary-degenerescence model as the dominant scientific theory in the nineteenth century, and it is this very model (best encapsulated in the social and moral decline of Émile Zola's Rougon-Macquart family) that became naturalism's dominant feature, shaping its fictional representation of sexuality in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the rupture Foucault detects in the scientific shift from hereditary physiology to psychology at the turn of the century is, I will argue, reflected in naturalism's representation of sexuality from the turn of the century onward. Twentieth-century German, American and Canadian naturalist fiction increasingly highlights psychoanalytic determinants, thus reversing the earlier nineteenth-century Zolaesque displacement of psychology into physiology.

In my analysis of these shifts in naturalism's treatment of sexuality, I also propose to interweave Michel Foucault's theory with feminist theories. The relationship between contemporary feminists and the French discourse analyst is by no means unambiguous or without contradictions, but I contend that Foucault's theory intersects with naturalism and feminism at the following important points: the emphasis on the material body that is shaped in culture and history; the role of institutions as determining forces in the individual's life; and the role of sexuality as both a cultural construct and a determining force in human life. Although numerous critics have interpreted the naturalist emphasis on sexuality in terms of "liberation" and "frankness," a discourse that has been supported and encouraged by the authors themselves, Foucault and poststructuralist feminists (e.g., Chris Weedon and Kornelia Hauser) teach us that sexuality intersects with power and is thus far from constituting a "liberating" force.

This is not to dismiss the important work of earlier, pioneering theorists of American naturalism, including Donald Pizer, Eric Sundquist

and, more recently, June Howard and Lee Mitchell, to name but a few. In contrast to these earlier writers, however, I will adopt a more specifically revisionary perspective that is prompted by a feminist, Foucauldian, and comparative approach. Exploring naturalism's intertextuality, its efforts at appropriating, recycling, and translating other genres and documentary texts, I will emphasize differences, multiplicity, and the subtle shifts that occurred from one time period to the next, from one culture to the next. Thus I will highlight some of the differences between Canadian and American naturalist forms.

Part 1 provides a theoretical frame by establishing a dialogue between naturalism, Foucault, and feminism; Part 2 applies this theory to Dreiser's early and middle fiction, to *Sister Carrie* (1900) and a representative sketch from *A Gallery of Women* (1929). Recently, Dreiser scholars have become very interested in Dreiser's treatment of desire (Walter Benn Michaels), consumer culture (Rachel Bowlby), and the creation of subjectivity through role playing (Philip Fisher).[6] These concerns intersect in interesting ways to crystallize new questions on the techniques of modern power in the twentieth-century social network, questions that I propose to explore in Part 2. Other Dreiser scholars interpret desire as the protagonists' ultimate quest for a "higher," spiritual ideal (Larry Hussman; Arun Mukherjee), or distinguish between real and enacted desires (Ellen Moers). New historicist Walter Michaels has given Dreiser scholarship new impetus by discussing desire as a force that does not work against but for capitalism and consumerism (see also June Howard and Rachel Bowlby). Although much of my argument is stimulated by this second line of thought, it will be my task to explore the more specific question of how much the creation of a desirable subjectivity implies an apparently paradoxical "voluntary subjection" to the norms and power networks of society. How is sexuality put to work in the social machinery of power?

In *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser's focus is on a radical deployment of sexuality, a sexuality that is detached from any family alliance and widely dispersed outside the boundaries of family and marriage. Deeply sexualized as a living icon of her consumer culture, Carrie Meeber's docile body rises to the top of her social order, so that her sexualized body becomes an oxymoronic icon of female empowerment and simultaneous subjection. Conversely, the disintegrating male body (encapsulated in George Hurstwood's social decline and suicide) represents the threat to a male

---

6 For titles and full citations of the critics mentioned in this paragraph, see "Select Bibliography on Theodore Dreiser" and "Select Bibliography on Naturalism."

order that is culturally challenged by women's growing demands for new economic and social rights. Whereas in nineteenth-century naturalism the diseased, disintegrating male body symbolized a proletarianized working class, in American twentieth-century naturalism it represents the more general "crisis of masculinity" prompted by the spectre of the *fin-de-siècle* new woman. Moreover, the new woman confronts the male naturalist narrator with his own crisis (of authority and masculinity). Trying to define female sexuality in masculine terms in his sketch on "Emanuela," the narrator is confronted with the very contradictions that we find at the heart of naturalism. The male narrative voice of authority simultaneously assumes the role of "liberating" the new woman's sexuality and frames and contains her sexuality in new (pre)conceptions of female sexual "normality."

Part 3 turns to F. P. Grove's German and Canadian version of naturalism, which I will discuss as a poetics of (parodic) difference, hoping to avoid any easy conflations between the two authors. A detailed comparison on the intertextual relationship between Dreiser and Grove is needed because it has become a critical commonplace to juxtapose Grove's name with Dreiser's, especially in short introductions and afterwords in Grove's reprinted works.[7] Establishing himself as a Canadian writer of prairie fiction, Grove was quickly embraced by his readers as the "Canadian Dreiser." It was Robert Ayre who introduced this epithet in 1932, and Northrop Frye repeated it in the obituary for Grove in 1948.[8] No doubt, the critics have sought to place Grove within a "recognized tradition" in order to assist his canonization as a Canadian author, an author who during his life time had always bemoaned what he perceived as the lack of an appreciative readership. But just as Grove rejected the label of naturalism for his writing, so he rejected any association with Dreiser. Indeed, he claimed emphatically in a letter to Carleton Stanley: "I am glad you defend me against Dreiser. I can't stand the man. Nor Sinclair Lewis. The more I dislike them, the less I say about them."[9]

---

7 See Kristjana Gunnars, "Afterword," *Settlers of the Marsh* by Frederick Philip Grove , New Canadian Library (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989) 267–75; and R. E. Watters, "Introduction," *The Master of the Mill*, by Frederick Philip Grove, New Canadian Library (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1961) vii–xiii.

8 Robert Ayre, "A Solitary Giant," *Canadian Forum* 12 (1932), 255-57, rpt. in *Frederick Philip Grove: Critical Views of Canadian Writers*, ed. Desmond Pacey (Toronto: Ryerson, 1970) 17; Northrop Frye, "Canadian Dreiser," rpt. in Pacey, 186.

9 Frederick Philip Grove, *The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove*, ed. Desmond Pacey (Toronto & Buffalo: U of Toronto P, 1976) 504.

Grove's emphatic tone reveals more of his own "anxiety of influence" than of his actual knowledge or ignorance of Dreiser's works. And since Grove has taken so much pleasure in deceiving his Canadian readership about his real identity as the German writer Felix Paul Greve, we are bound to be all the more suspicious of such vehement protestations.

Grove's biographical story of transculturation is a fascinating one of faked and fictionalized identities. In 1909, Grove fabricated his suicide in Germany to escape huge debt payments and to start a new life in Canada, an adventurous personal history that has been meticulously pieced together by Douglas Spettigue in *FPG: The European Years* (1973).[10] After Grove (FPG) left Germany, his two early novels – *Fanny Eßler* (1905) and *Maurermeister Ihles Haus* (1906), both published under the name Felix Paul Greve – were forgotten in Germany until Spettigue rediscovered them in the course of his search for the "real" FPG and had them translated into English. But the works have remained somewhat marginalized in scholarship on Grove's writing: "Strictly as a novel this book should have remained unknown in Canada as it had been forgotten in Germany," writes K. P. Stich in a condemning review of the translated *Master Mason's House*.[11]

It cannot be coincidence that Grove has become canonized as the creator of tragic prairie patriarchs (Desmond Pacey) and as a literary con-man (Douglas Spettigue) and that the only two novels of Grove's that present female protagonists should be dismissed so easily.[12] With my emphasis on relationships of power, it is precisely these two novels that will provide a rich textual resource for an analysis of gender relations of power and for an exploration of women's strategies of resistance. It is my intention to shift the critical focus in Grove scholarship from the patriarchal prairie pioneers, or the "tragic failure" of the producer artist, or the artist as "con-man," to the techniques Grove develops to deal with more marginalized issues and characters: women, the immigrant arriving in Canada, the social outsider.

Grove was a translator before turning to fiction; Part 3 illustrates that much of his fiction is indeed an effort at appropriating and "translat-

---

10 Douglas Spettigue, *FPG: The European Years* (Ottawa: Oberon, 1973)

11 K. P. Stich, "F.P.G.: Over German Trails," rev. of *The Master Mason's House*, by Frederick Philip Grove, *Essays on Canadian Writing* 6 (1977), 149.

12 See Robin Mathews's criticism of the critics' negative evaluation of Grove's fiction in "F. P. Grove: An Important Version of *The Master of the Mill* Discovered," *Studies in Canadian Literature* 7 (1982): 241.

ing" literary and documentary texts and at recontextualizing his German fiction in the new Canadian literary tradition. I will discuss these "translations" as a typical feature of his naturalism. As Grove based his early fiction on the life story of his German lover (now better known as Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven), his fiction sheds light on the appropriation of the female voice into male naturalist fiction. Furthermore, his first protagonist, Fanny Essler, emerges as a fictional figure in his Canadian writing, whereby her sexual picaresque is recycled, "translated" and recontextualized in a new culture and in radically different settings. Grove's version of naturalism thus has to be seen as a creative and parodic spiral, where one text gives birth to the next, highlighting the deep intertextual potential of the naturalist genre.

Thus Grove's fiction also echoes Baguley's point about naturalism's multigeneric quality, which both feeds on and degrades other generic forms, particularly the expressions of "high" art forms such as myth and tragedy. Grove's early and Dreiser's middle works of fiction not only make use of this parodic vision but, more importantly, their twentieth-century naturalism frequently turns into self-parody. Nineteenth-century French naturalism is deeply ironic, satiric, and parodic; twentieth-century German, Canadian, and American naturalist fiction appears more overtly self-deconstructive, whereby naturalism's parodic vision frequently comes full circle, turning upon and feeding on its own genre. The male narrative voice of authority continues to insist on the truth value of its analysis, but is often baffled by the feminist voices erupting in the text and contradicting the dominating male (narrative) ideology, thus critiquing the genre from within.

Parts 2 and 3 examine naturalism's self-deconstructive potential; Parts 4 and 5 focus more strongly on the transformative limits of the naturalist genre. Interweaving male power with male versions of sexuality, the second half of this study highlights naturalism's ideological boundaries and its complicity with dominant power principles. Again, this emphasis on male sexualized power has to be seen as a recontextualization of the conventions of nineteenth-century European naturalism, as David Baguley has described them. Baguley has countered the tendency of critics "to interpret naturalist literature as a *passive* depiction of reality" (*NF* 7), arguing that although naturalism draws its readers into a "readable" text, it never lulls them into easy mimetic complacency. Rather, the naturalistic text is a snare that takes on its own generic-ness, undermining the realist "contract" with the reader's expectations and instigating a new (dis)order. The naturalist text tends to confront the reader with scandal, excess, or frustrating endings that have the effect of shocking the complacent bourgeois consumers of books out of their

secure expectations. At the heart of naturalism, then, Baguley recognizes the genre's deeply entropic vision: "Heredity, illness, obsession, sexuality, are disruptive factors which break up the fragile balance of differences, of structures, of codes. The characteristic movement of the naturalist novel is in the direction of disintegration and confusion" (*NF* 208).

It is this very entropic vision at the heart of naturalism that twentieth-century naturalist fiction increasingly renders problematic, as Parts 4 and 5 will illustrate. Despite its continual rupture of secure expectations, Dreiser and Grove's naturalism often inscribes new normative constraints, by justifying male sexual prerogatives with biological laws of nature or with psychological concepts of "normality." Naturalist fiction often disrupts conventional assumptions about sexuality, but it also participates in the cultural creation of new norms. Indeed, one might argue that twentieth-century American and Canadian naturalism self-consciously highlights what is present as an undercurrent of nineteenth-century naturalism, showing how easily naturalism can be put in the service of a conventional social order. In the course of history, naturalists have proliferated particular models on sexuality, classifying between normal and abnormal, healthy and unhealthy sexual practices. In their repeated association of prostitution with disease, of sexual excess with punishment, of normal sexuality with heterosexuality, their literature has not always had the effect of disrupting middle-class norms, but has often had a "normalizing" function.

Part 4 illustrates this point by examining Dreiser's exploration of the eroticization of bourgeois power in the Cowperwood trilogy. Dreiser presents the American robber baron F. A. Cowperwood as an eroticized icon of power, who displaces his power in other (female and artistic) "bodies." Establishing a metaphorical analogy between the capitalist speculator and the naturalist artist, Dreiser exposes the potential complicity of his fiction with the capitalist power principle. If anything, Dreiser highlights that naturalist fiction does not automatically have a "resisting" function, but can very easily become a tool of the dominant power principle (whether it be patriarchal or capitalist). Just as Foucault emphasizes that any resisting discourse can easily be co-opted to serve the power it opposes, so Dreiser's twentieth-century naturalism shows an ironic self-awareness of the genre's occasional complicity with dominant structures of power.

Continuing Dreiser's exploration of bourgeois power, Part 5 highlights that Canadian naturalism is far from simply imitating American conventions. In contrast to Dreiser, whose characters are generally involved in a wild spiral of promiscuity, Grove's Canadian fiction situates

sexuality back into the patriarchal family institution. Thus Grove's sexualization of power is located into the private Canadian prairie farm, recontextualized to reflect the Canadian agricultural tradition. Even Grove's Canadian business novel, *The Master of the Mill* (1944), foregrounds the sexual dynamics within a single family, which goes hand in hand with the "incestuous" holding on to power, as the son inherits the father's strategies of power and his economic control over the family business. If the sons affirm the secure (male) boundaries of the naturalist genre, the women, and especially the daughter figures in Grove's German and Canadian fiction, rebel against naturalism's generic boundaries for women, just as they rebel against the confinement imposed on them in the patriarchal family. Even as they challenge the father's law they are, however, continually in danger of being seduced into submission by the father's institutionalized power. Although an increasingly strong figure, the Grovian daughter figure generally remains caught in naturalism's gender boundaries, unable to effect any real change in her father's house.

In naturalist fiction, it is the principle of power itself that is sexualized, which accounts for naturalism's emphasis on sado-masochistic scenes in the nineteenth century and its emphasis on rape and rapist sexualities in the twentieth century. The nineteenth-century prostitute is tied into sado-masochistic relations of power; the twentieth-century hetaira-actress titillates and tortures the male consumer with imaginary pleasures that he cannot afford. Nineteenth-century naturalism is concerned with adultery and sexual contagion; Dreiser's attention turns to premarital sex and its dangers while Grove explores the problem of rape in marriage. Thus, the sexualized prototypes of European naturalism do not simply disappear, but undergo changes in representation and ideological content. The naturalism that emerges in the twentieth century is dynamic, changing, and increasingly self-deconstructive. And yet it is also a narrative form in which male forms of power continue to dominate. Although the female characters are strong forces of rebellion and enjoy increased social, economic, and legal powers, their oppositional élan is often recontained within naturalism's secure boundaries. Thus, in Dreiser and Grove's American and Canadian naturalism, sexuality continues to constitute the privileged field of (female) subjection and docility, with naturalist structures and conventions continuing to frame and control female (sexual) rebellion.

I. Naturalism and Foucault

This page intentionally left blank